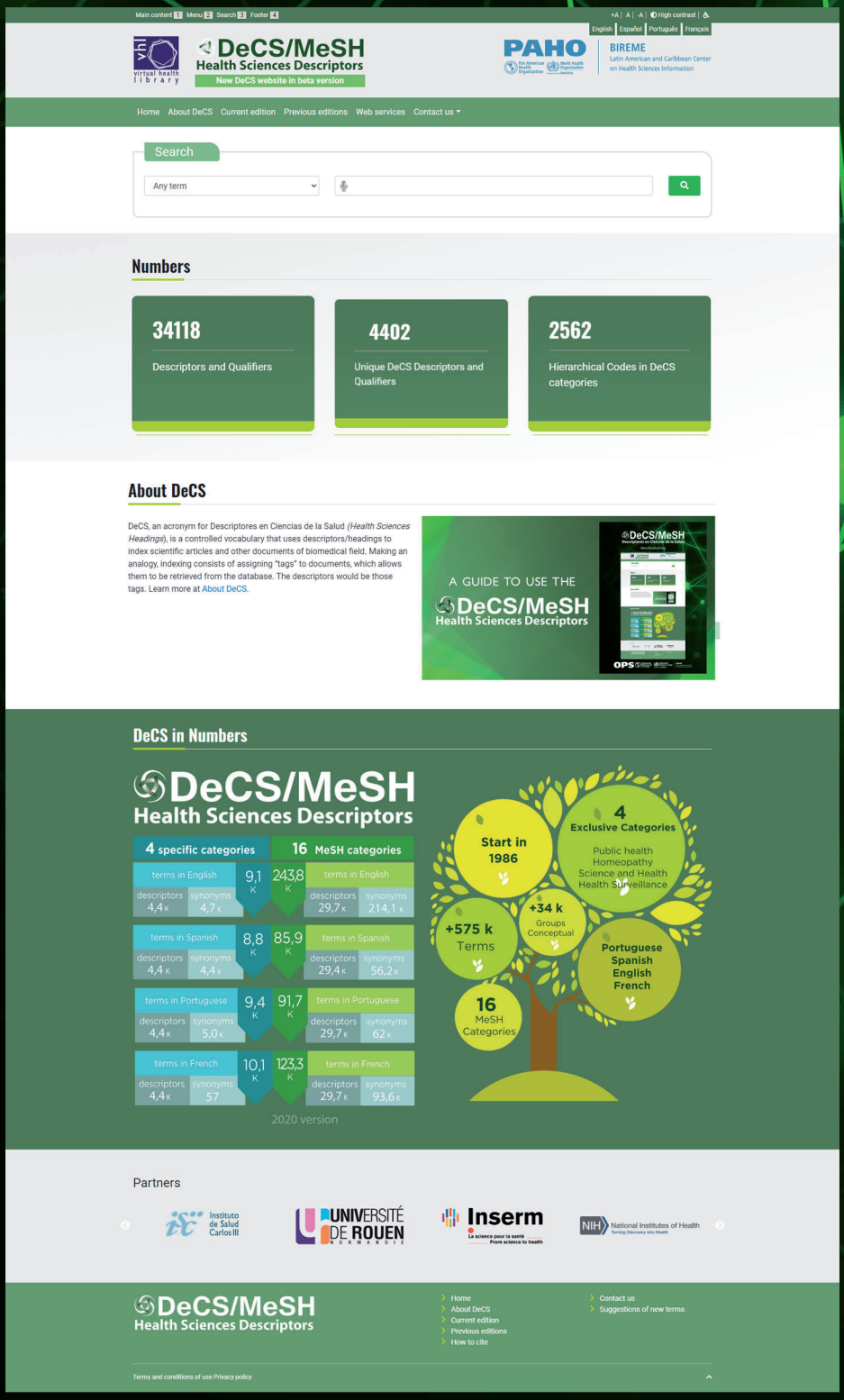
DeCS/MeSH
Health Sciences Descriptors

decs.bvsalud.org



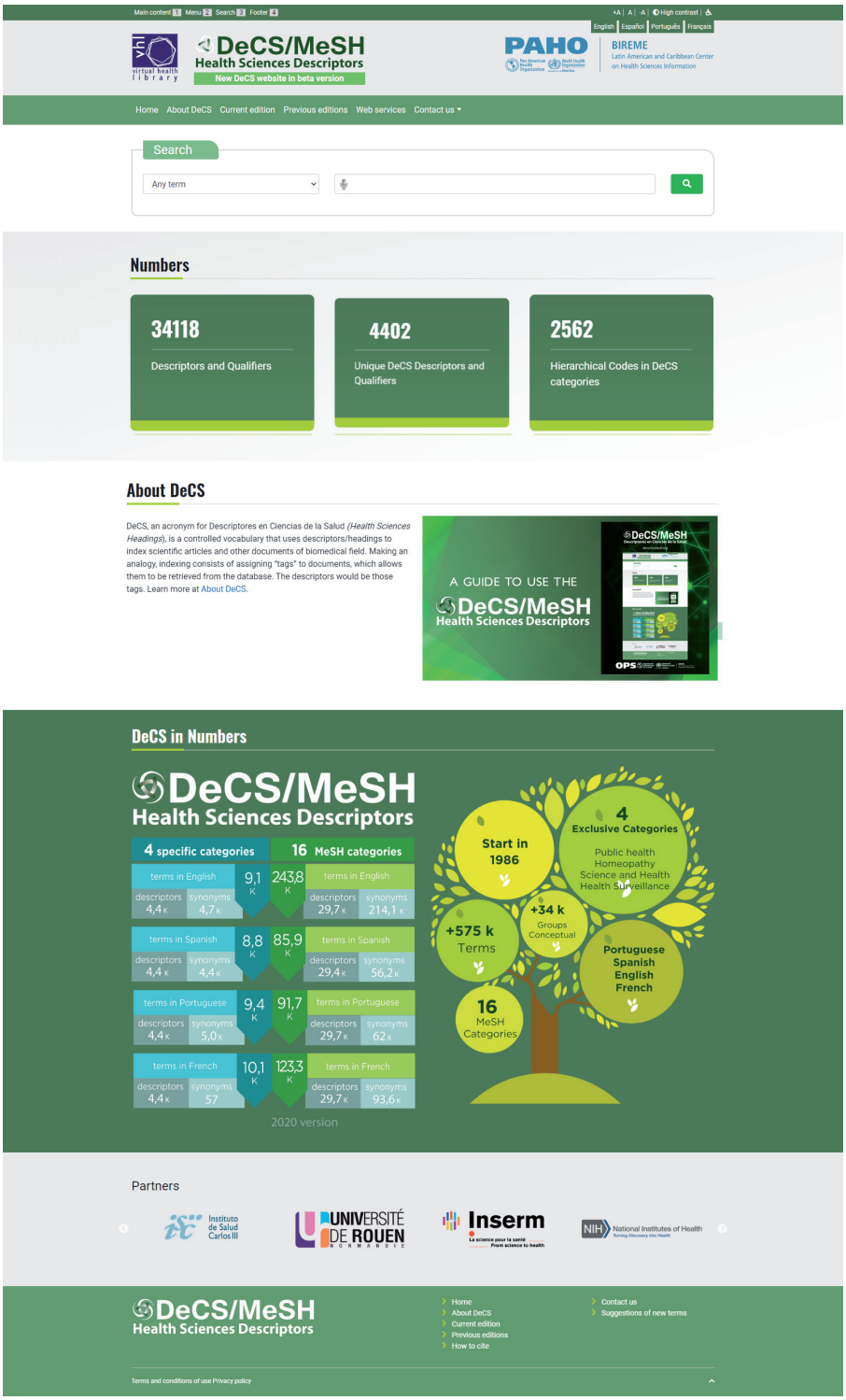
PAHO Pan American Health Organization
World Health Organization Regional Office for the Americas
BIREME
Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information

DeCS/MeSH
Health Sciences Descriptors

A GUIDE TO USE THE NEW DECS/MESH PORTAL

https://beta.decs.bvsalud.org/

Welcome to DeCS/MeSH!
This tutorial will show you how to search the new DeCS/MeSH portal.



WHAT IS DeCS/MeSH?

The Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) thesaurus, produced by BIREME/PAHO/WHO, is a hierarchically organized controlled vocabulary derived from the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) thesaurus produced by the US National Library of Medicine (NLM).

In English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, DeCS/MeSH is used to index technical and scientific literature from the biomedical and health sciences, as well as to search and retrieve information in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) databases.

Aiming to allow the use of common terminology to search in multiple languages, providing a consistent and unique means for retrieving information, DeCS/MeSH integrates the LILACS methodology and is an integrating component of the VHL.

It also participates in the NLM UMLS - Unified Medical Language System - health terminology and semantic network development project, with responsibility for updating and sending the MeSH terms in Portuguese and Spanish.

The existence of exclusive categories in DeCS that do not exist in MeSH allows the coverage of specific issues from the Latin American and Caribbean regions, improving access to information relevant to that region.

DeCS updates follow MeSH's frequency, that is, they are annual. Because they are dynamic, the vocabularies are constantly changing. In each annual version, deletions, substitutions, and creation of new descriptors, synonyms, or areas that reflect current scientific production are made.

In addition to the NLM, which governs the updates, DeCS has the following partnerships:

- The School of Medicine of the University of Chile for the translation of concepts into American Spanish;
- Instituto de Salud Carlos III for the translation of concepts into European Spanish;
- Institut National de la Santé et de Recherche Médicale, INSERM, which provides the translation of the MeSH concepts into French;
- L'université de Rouen, Normandie, for the translation into French of concepts in categories that are exclusive to DeCS.

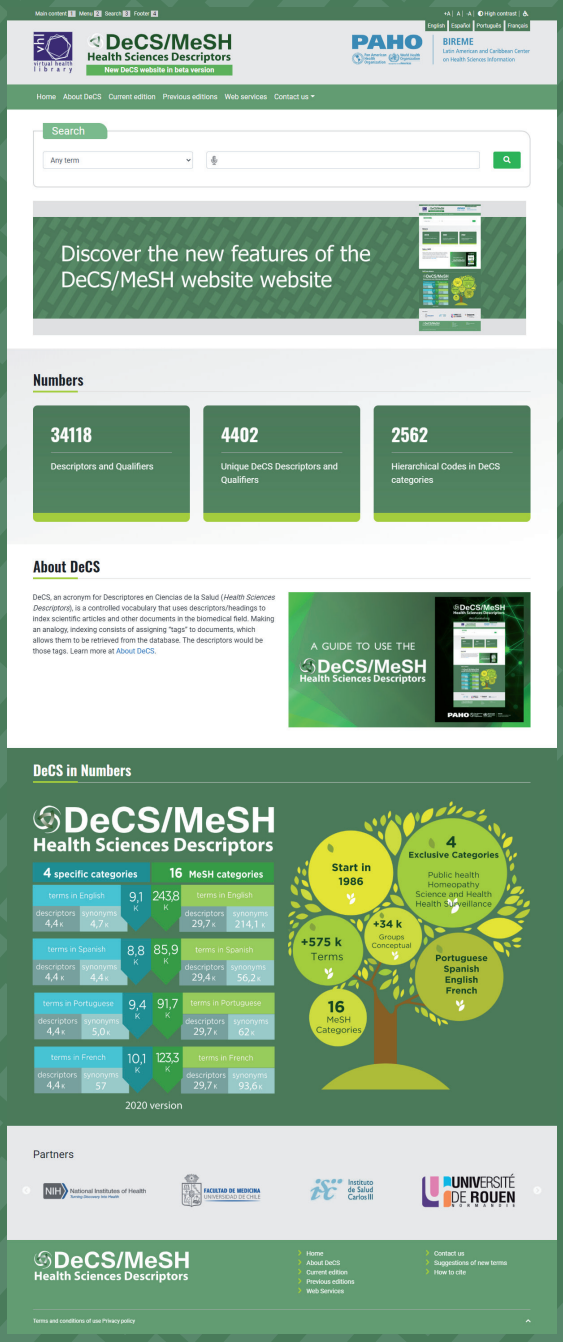
DISCOVER THE NEW FEATURES OF THE DECS/MESH WEBSITE

The new DeCS/MeSH website brings new features to facilitate the search and usage of Health Sciences descriptors!

The changes are focused on the site interface to promote better usability and accessibility. The contents of DeCS/MeSH remain the same, being updated annually. For more information on Health Sciences Descriptors, visit About DeCS.

The main improvements are:

- Search in any language (English, French, Portuguese or Spanish) independently of the portal interface
- The default search is for Any term even if it is present in the middle of the expression that makes up the descriptor or its synonym, also known as Key Word In Context (or KWIC)
- The search expression is highlighted in light yellow in the result
- Individualized visualization of the concepts that integrate the records
- The use of the asterisk * at the beggining or at the end of the search expression to retrieve more results



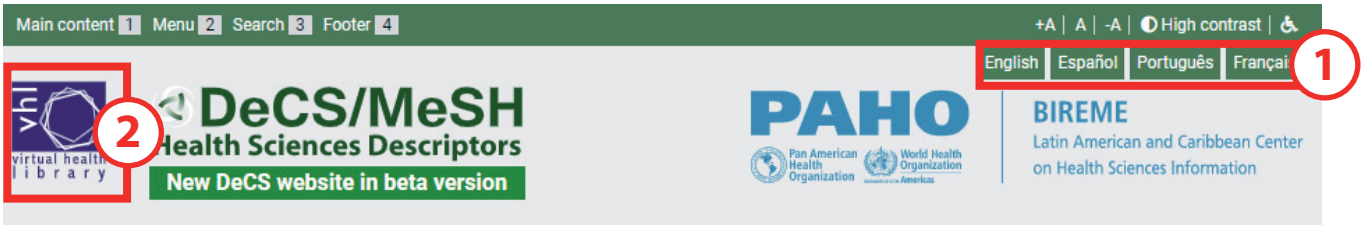
Search by any word or term, keywords in context (or KWIC), exact term, descriptor ID, tree number, and qualifier term were updated and maintained.

The Health Sciences Descriptors (DeCS) thesaurus, produced by BIREME/PAHO/WHO, is a hierarchically organized controlled vocabulary derived from the Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) thesaurus produced by the US National Library of Medicine (NLM).

In English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, DeCS/MeSH is used to index technical and scientific literature from the biomedical and health sciences, as well as to search and retrieve information in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) databases.

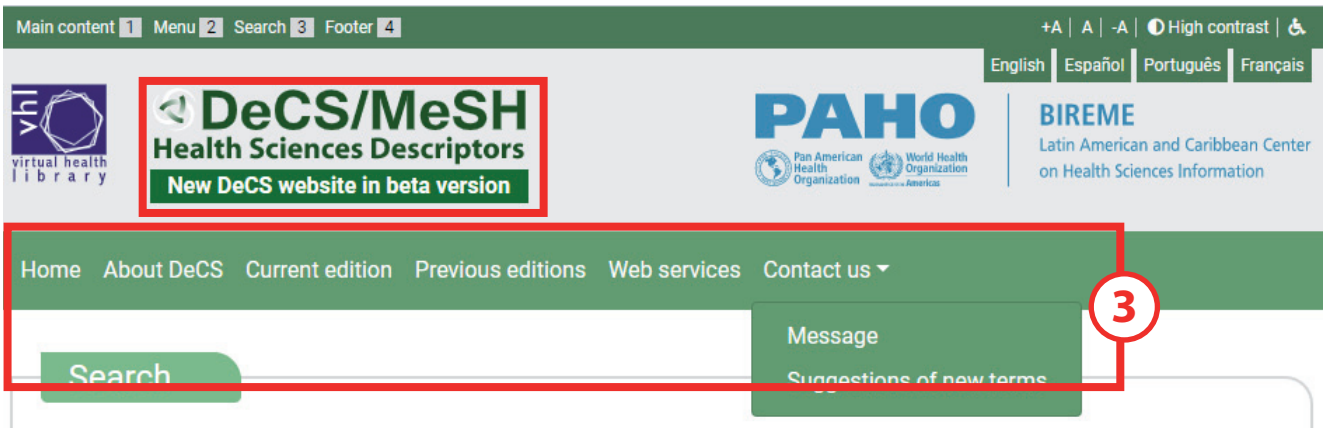
DeCS/MeSH FUNCTIONALITIES

The DeCS portal is presented as follows:



1) Language
In the upper right corner, you can change the interface language according to your preference.

2) Access to the Virtual Health Library (VHL) portal
In the upper left corner, there is a link to the VHL portal, where it is possible to search for scientific articles and other documents, using descriptors.



3) Menu

The "**Home**" button is used to return to the homepage when you are not on this page. The other way to return to the homepage is by clicking on the DeCS/MeSH logo.

"**About DeCS**" contains information about the origins of DeCS/MeSH, how it is organized and what its goal is.

In "**Current edition**", it is possible to access general changes related to the current DeCS/MeSH edition, such as changes to hierarchical codes, the lists for new, modified, and deleted descriptors by category, highlighted descriptors etc.

In "**Previous editions**", there are the annual versions from 1999 to the previous year, which may be useful to whoever wants to search about the vocabulary's evolution or about the course of any descriptor along the years.

For those who need to download the DeCS/MeSH database, there is the possibility of granting a license for its use. This is found in "**Web services**".

And, if there is a need to ask any questions, suggest terms, or write about any other issue related to DeCS, click on "**Contact us**". There are two other buttons: "**Message**" and "**Suggestions of new terms**" will direct you to these specific forms.

SEARCH FOR DESCRIPTORS

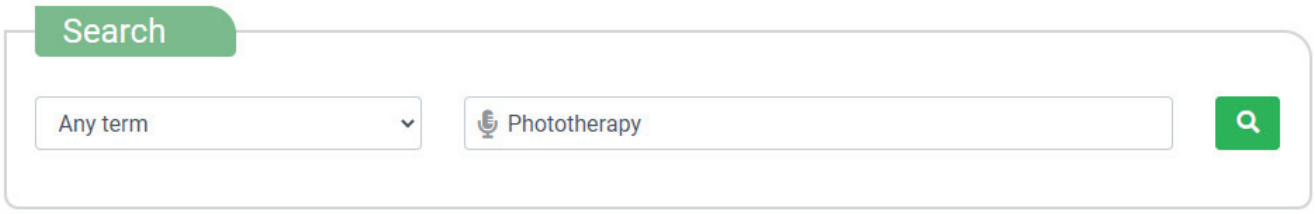
The new DeCS/MeSH portal allows searching in any language independent of the interface. It is also possible to search using a small part of the word or term (the old KeyWord In Context index or KWIC). In addition, it is possible to truncate the search term with an asterisk (*) or dollar sign ($), or to use Boolean operators (AND, OR, AND NOT, parentheses). The results in highlight are those that contain the searched expression.

1) Search types
The box on the left contains the types of search: Any term, Exact term, Descriptor UI, Hierarchical Code or Any qualifier term. More information on each one is described below. The default search type is Any term.

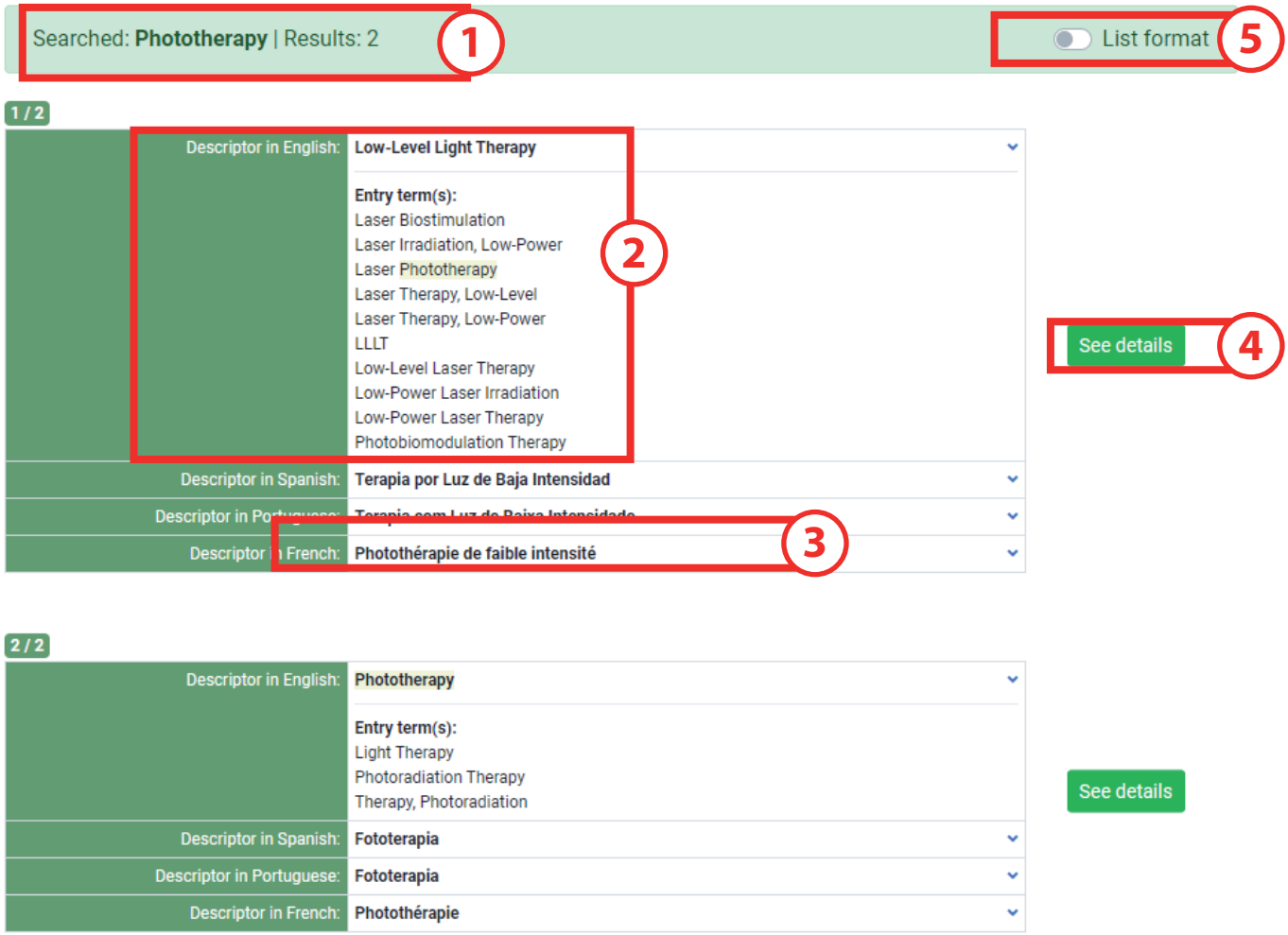
2) Search field and query
The entire term or only part of the term can be searched for in any of the DeCS/MeSH portal languages (English, French, Portuguese or Spanish).

3) Search icon
After typing in the search field, press enter or click on the search icon represented by the magnifying glass.

For example, search for the descriptor "Phototherapy" and press the search icon:



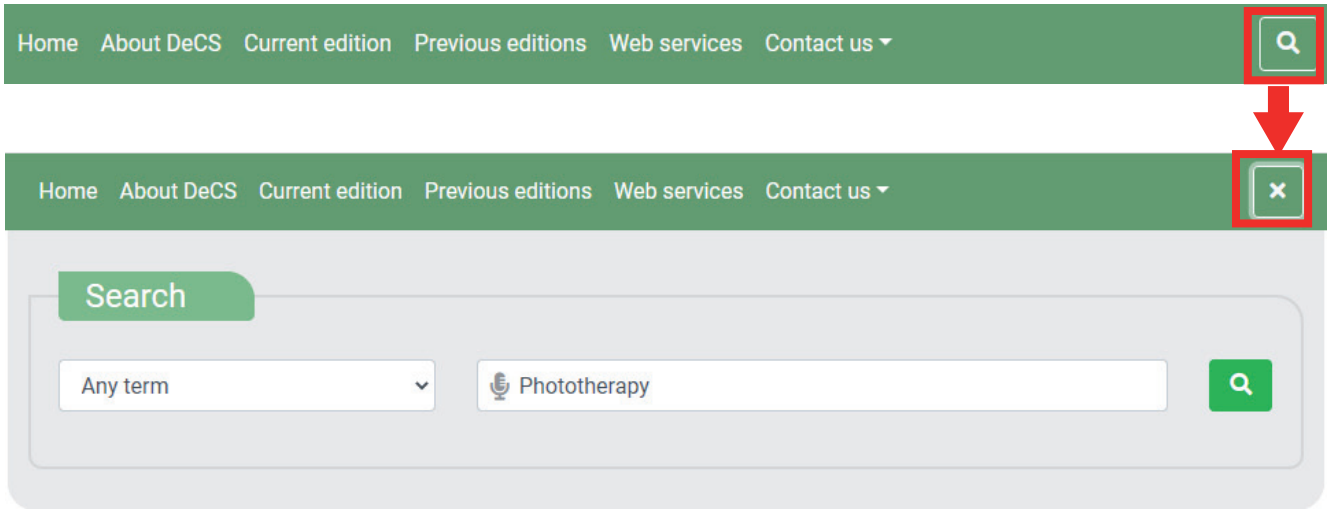
The result will be as follows:



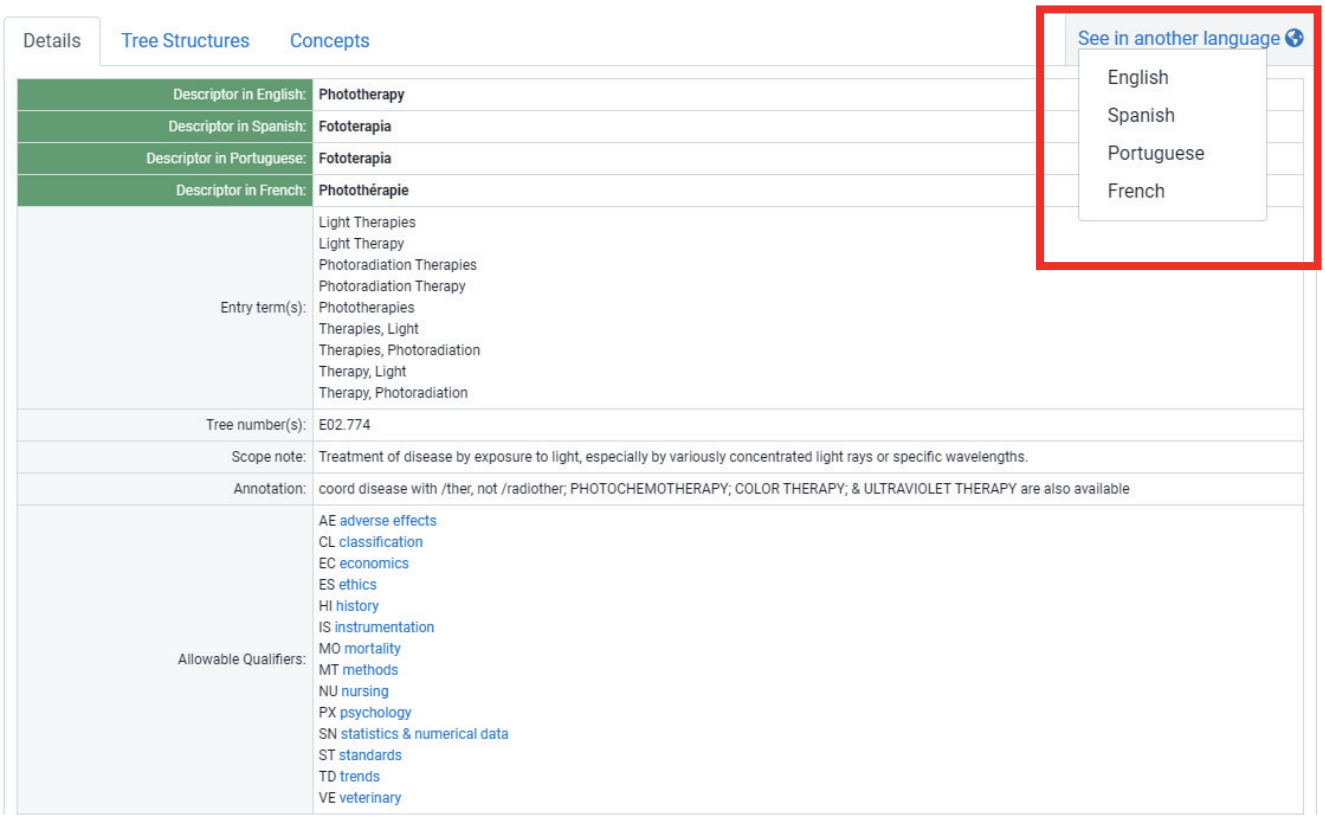
Red rectangles in the above image show the following **features and types of retrieved data:**

1) **Number of results**: The number of records which match your search is shown after "Results:";
2) **Entry terms**: The result of your search may be one or more entry terms;
3) **Result entries**: The search expression will be highlighted. Corresponding descriptors in other languages will be also shown;
4) **Details**: Click on the See details button to view more information about this descriptor;
5) **List of terms**: Click on the List format button to see the result as a list of the descriptors which contain the search expression.

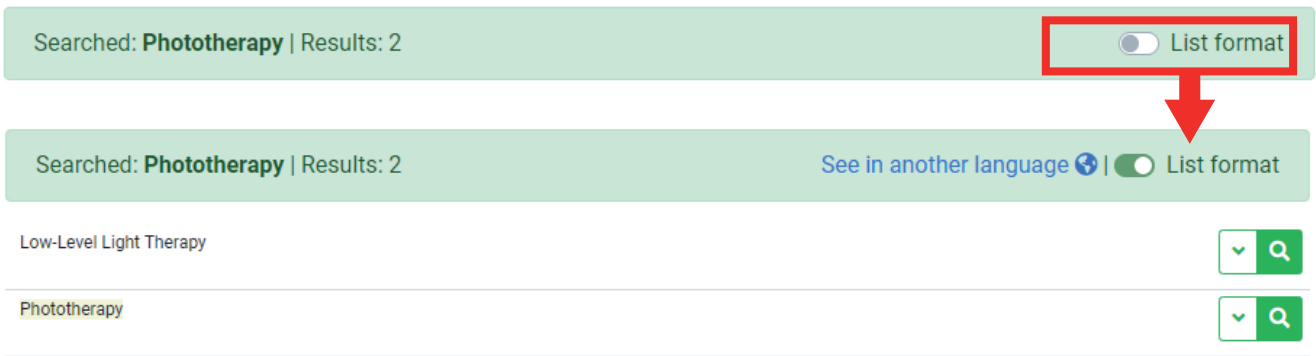
By clicking on the lens, the user goes back to the search field.



When clicking on **See details**, the page that will open is the one for viewing the complete record. You can see the result in another language by clicking on S**ee in another language**.



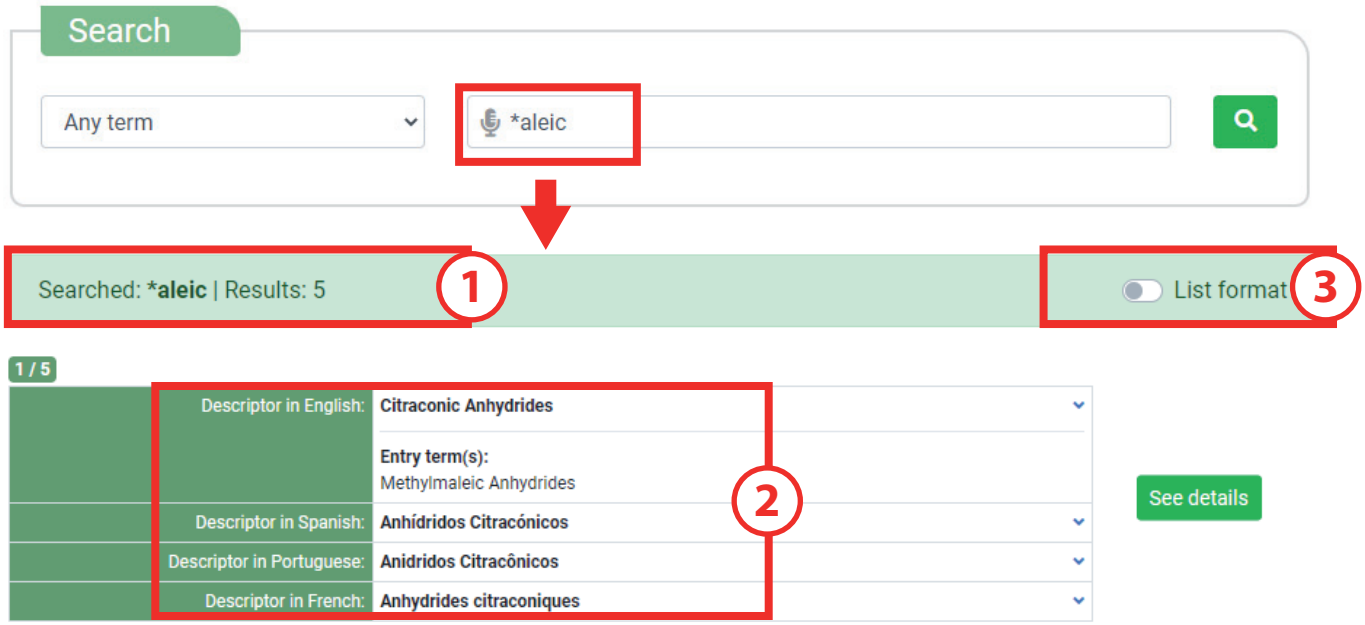
When clicking the **List format** button, the result is presented in a list.



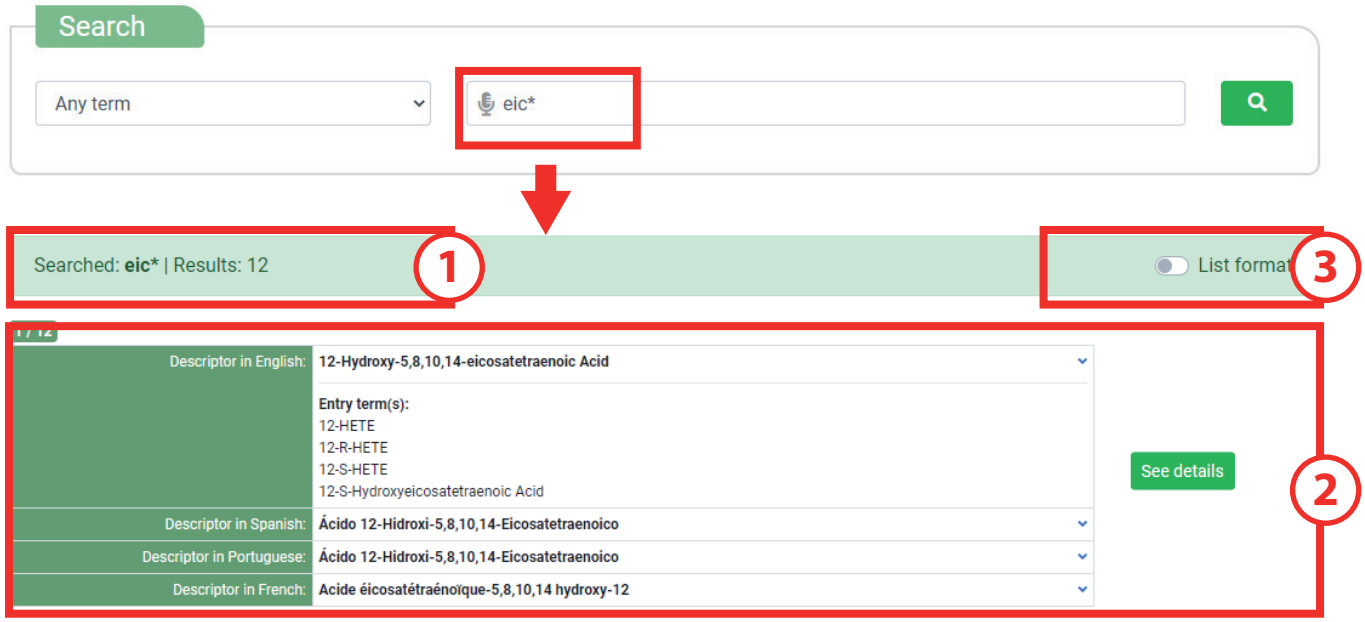
SEARCH WITH TRUNCATOR *

The new portal enables the user to search for part of the word that is present in the descriptor or alternative term.

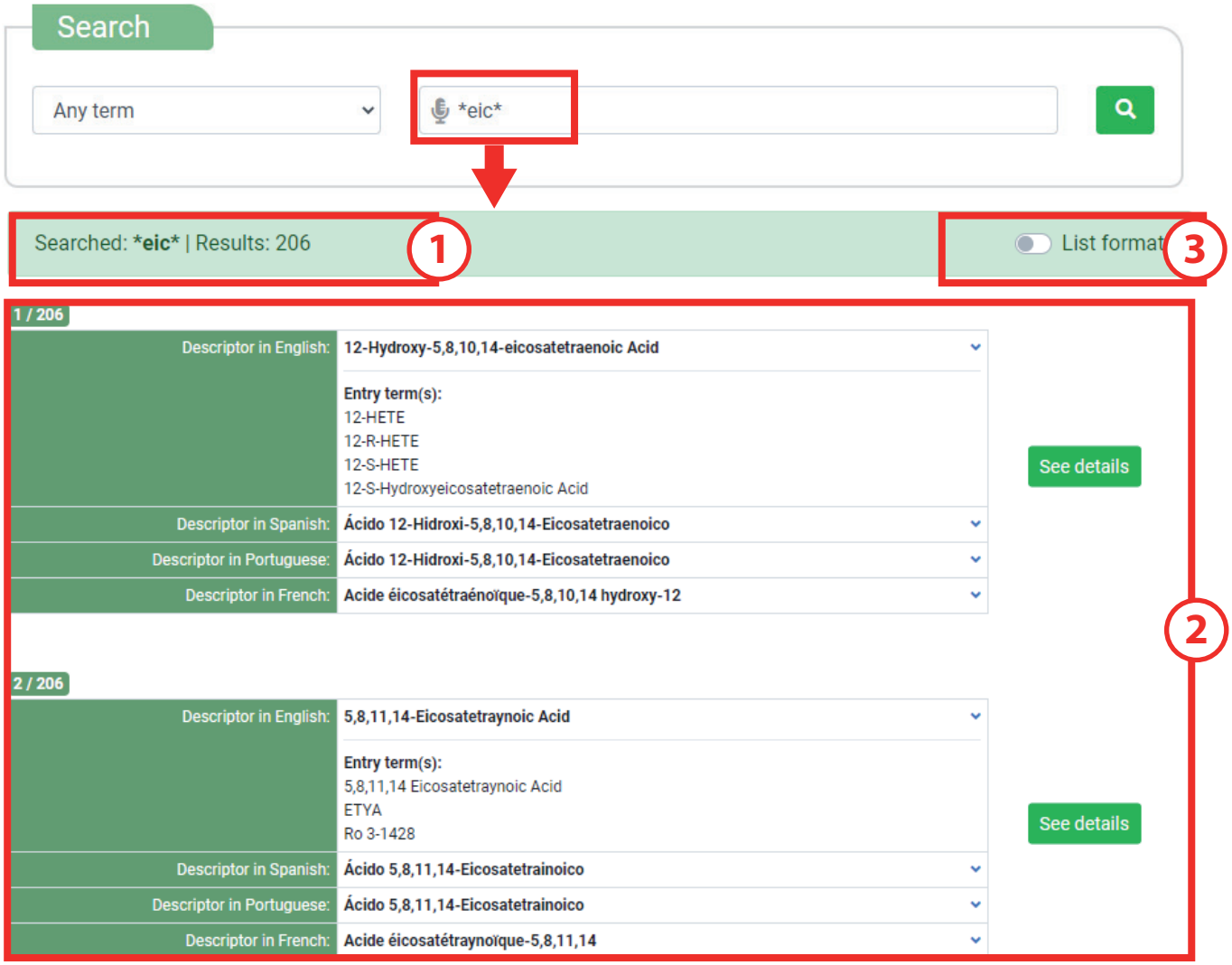
To search for terms that contain, for example, aleic at the end of the word, write *aleic in the **Any term** search field. The result will show
1) The number of records;
2) Records found with the search term highlighted;
3) The button to display the results in a list format.



To search for terms that contain, for example, eic at the beginning of the term, write eic* in the search field for Any term. The result will show:
1) The number of records;
2) The records found;
3) The button to display the results in a list.



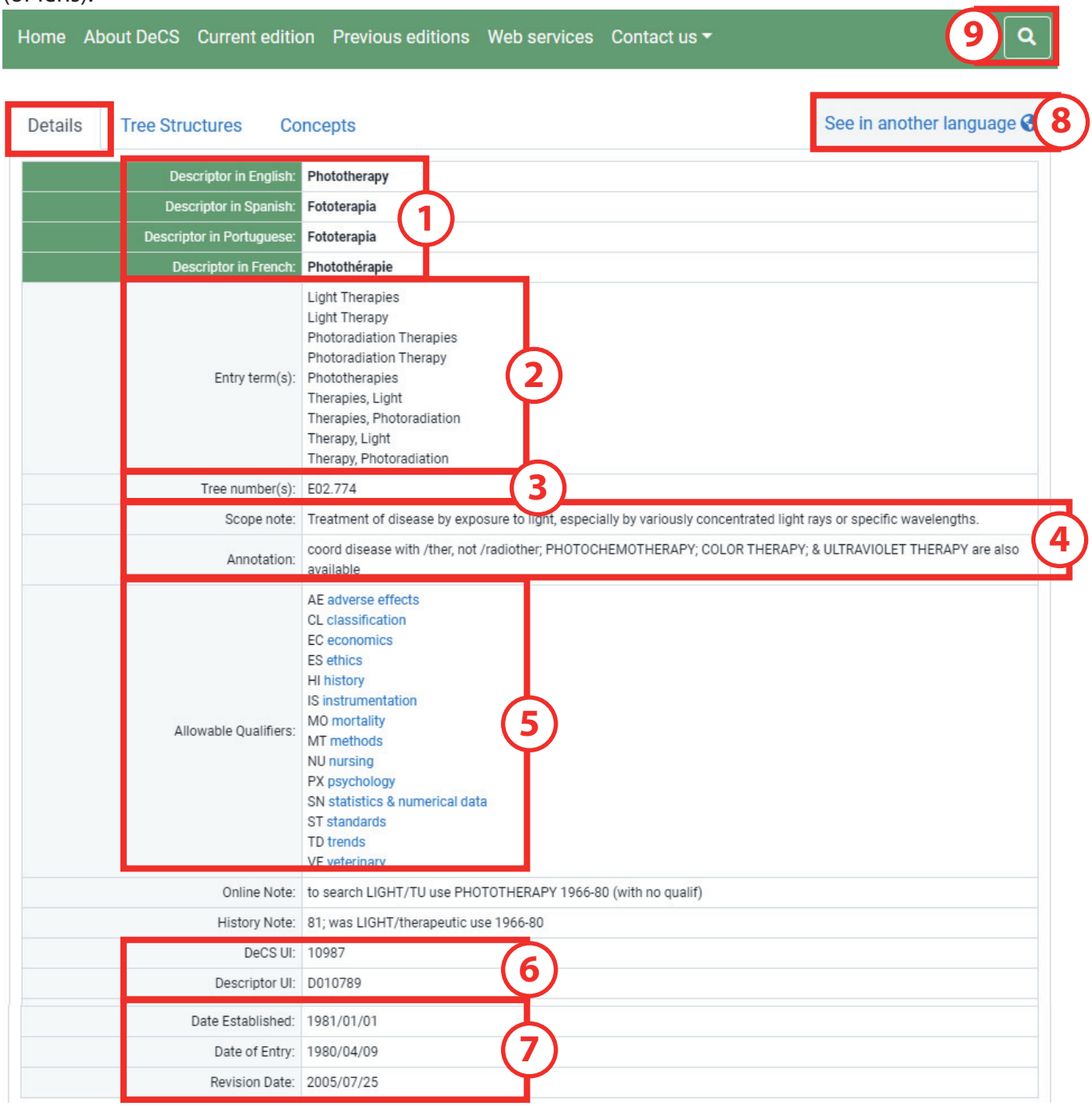
To search for terms that contain, for example, eic at the beginning or end of the term, write *eic* in the search field for **Any term**. The result will show:
1) The number of records;
2) The records found;
3) The button to display the results in a list.



DESCRIPTOR REGISTRATION - DETAILS TAB

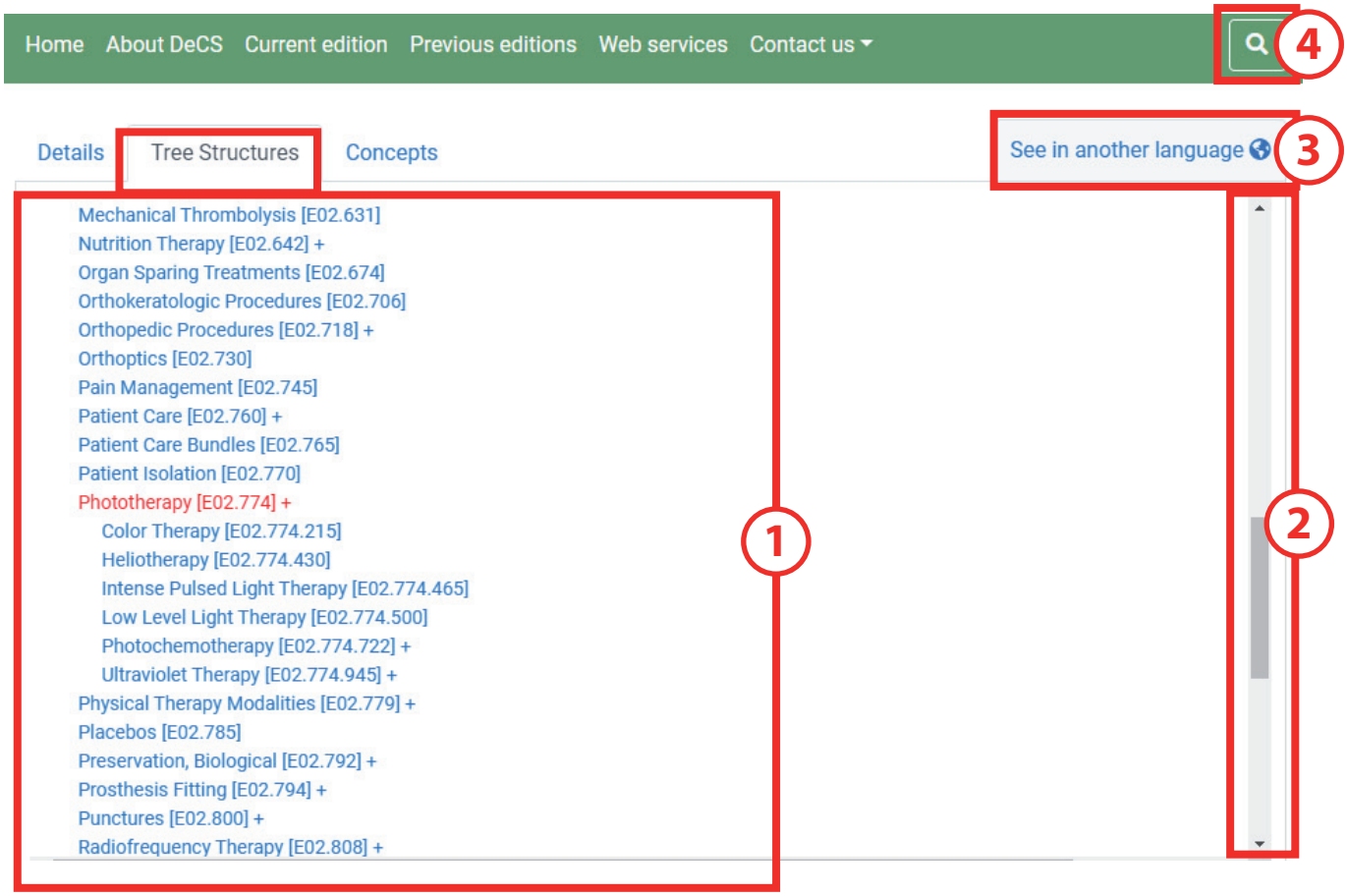
When you click on the **Details** tab, the descriptor record is opened.
The descriptor record is the data set that has:

1) A preferred term that is called a **descriptor** in the four languages of DeCS/MeSH;
2) Alternative or entry term(s) or synonym(s);
3) Hierarchical code(s) or tree number(s) that identify the descriptor's position in the DeCS/MeSH conceptual tree;
4) Scope and indexing notes (not mandatory);
5) The allowed qualifiers to be used together with the descriptor (not mandatory);
6) MeSH and DeCS record identifiers;
7) The dates of its creation, of its entry in the vocabulary and of the last revision of the record;
8) It is possible to change the display language of the same information by clicking on **View in another language**;
9) If the user wishes to return to the search field, he may do so by clicking on the magnifying glass (or lens).



DESCRIPTOR REGISTRATION - HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE TAB

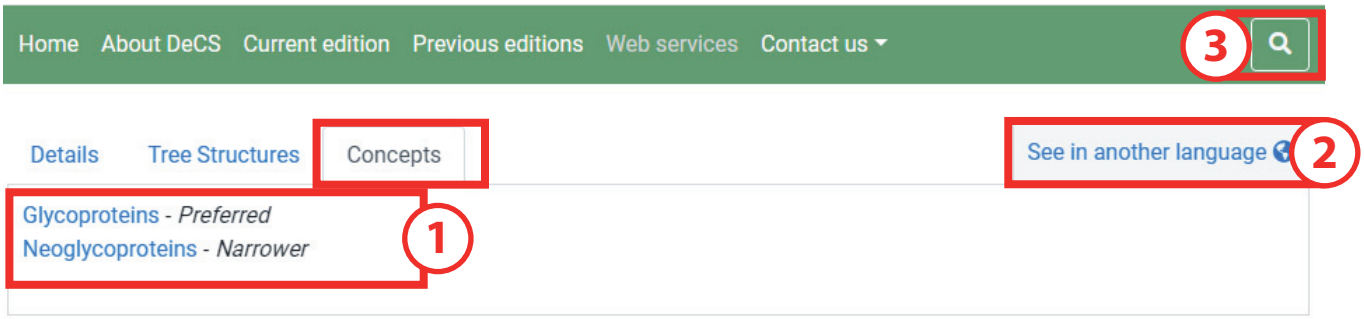
When you click on the Tree structures tab, the descriptor's location page is opened in the DeCS/ MeSH conceptual tree.
1) The descriptor is in a different color to emphasize its position, with descriptors above that represent broader concepts and with descriptors below, which represent more specific concepts;
2) Scroll bar when the tree is long;
3) It is possible to change the display language of the same information by clicking on See in another language;
4) If the user wishes to return to the search field, click on the magnifying glass or lens.



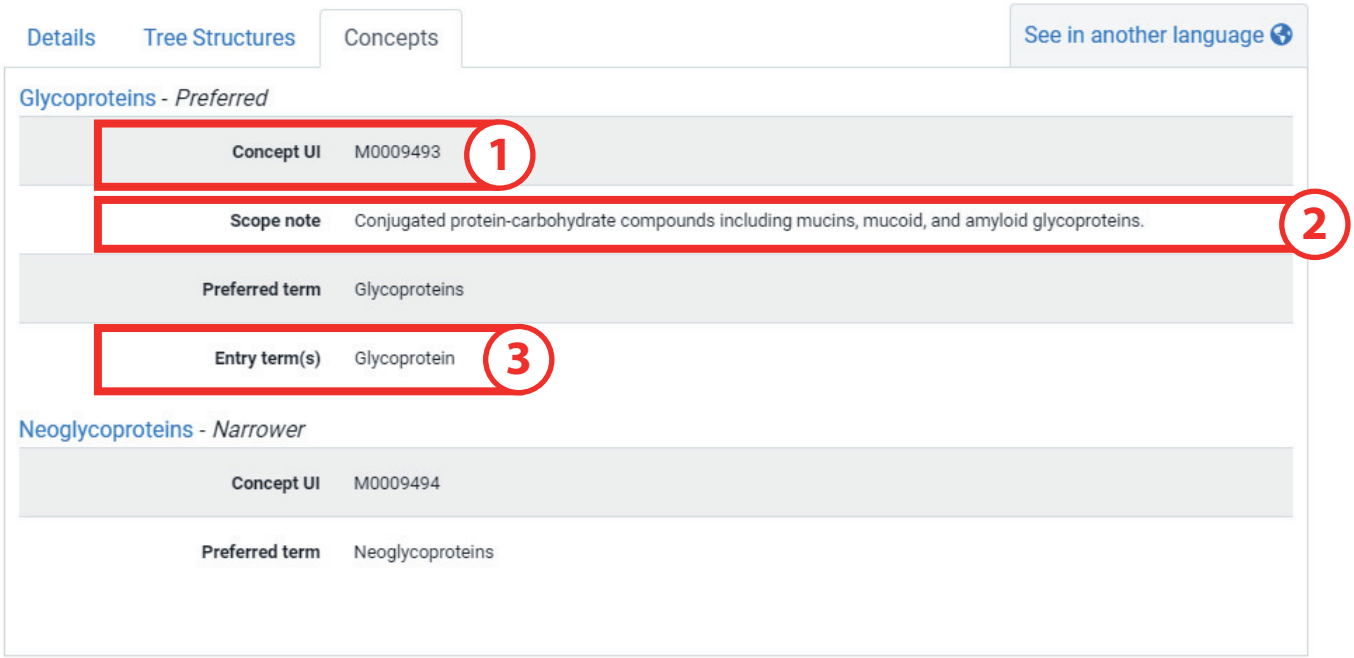
DESCRIPTOR REGISTRATION - CONCEPTS TAB

Alternative terms or synonyms can be terms with the same meaning as the descriptors or with approximate meanings, with small variations of words or included as separate entities. The record scope note should cover the broadest meaning common to the concepts within the same record. To address the concepts tab, the example of the descriptor Glycoproteins will be used. Type Glycoproteins in the search field and press the **See details** button. When you click on the **Concepts** tab, the concepts that make up the record are shown.

1) In this example, there are two concepts in the descriptor record: a preferred concept, which is the descriptor (mandatory in all records) and a non-preferred concept that has a closer relationship with the descriptor. The number of non-preferred concepts is not limited. Non-preferred terms within each of the concepts are considered synonymous to the preferred term of that concept;
2) It is possible to change the display language of the same information by clicking **See in another language**;
3) If the user wishes to go back to the search field, he may do so by clicking on the magnifying glass or lens.

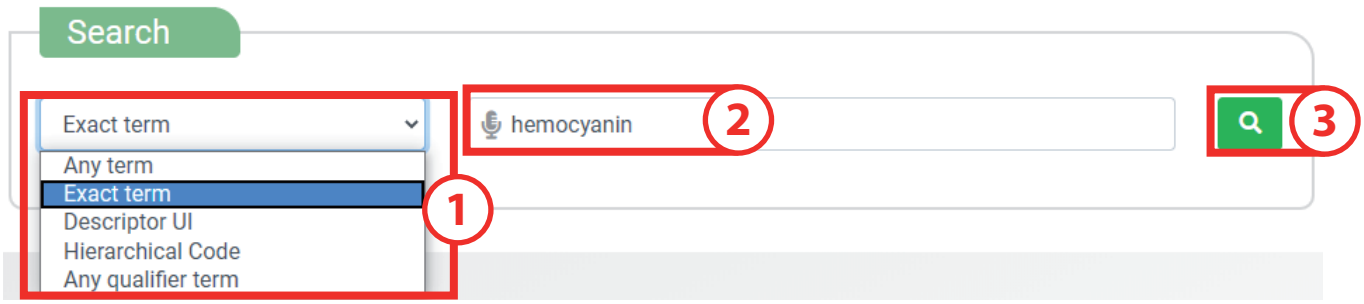


By clicking on the concepts in light blue, the record is expanded and more details about each concept are obtained, such as:
1) Unique concept identifier (Concept UI);
2) Concept scope note (not mandatory);
3) Concept entry terms (or alternative terms) (not mandatory).



SEARCH FOR EXACT TERM

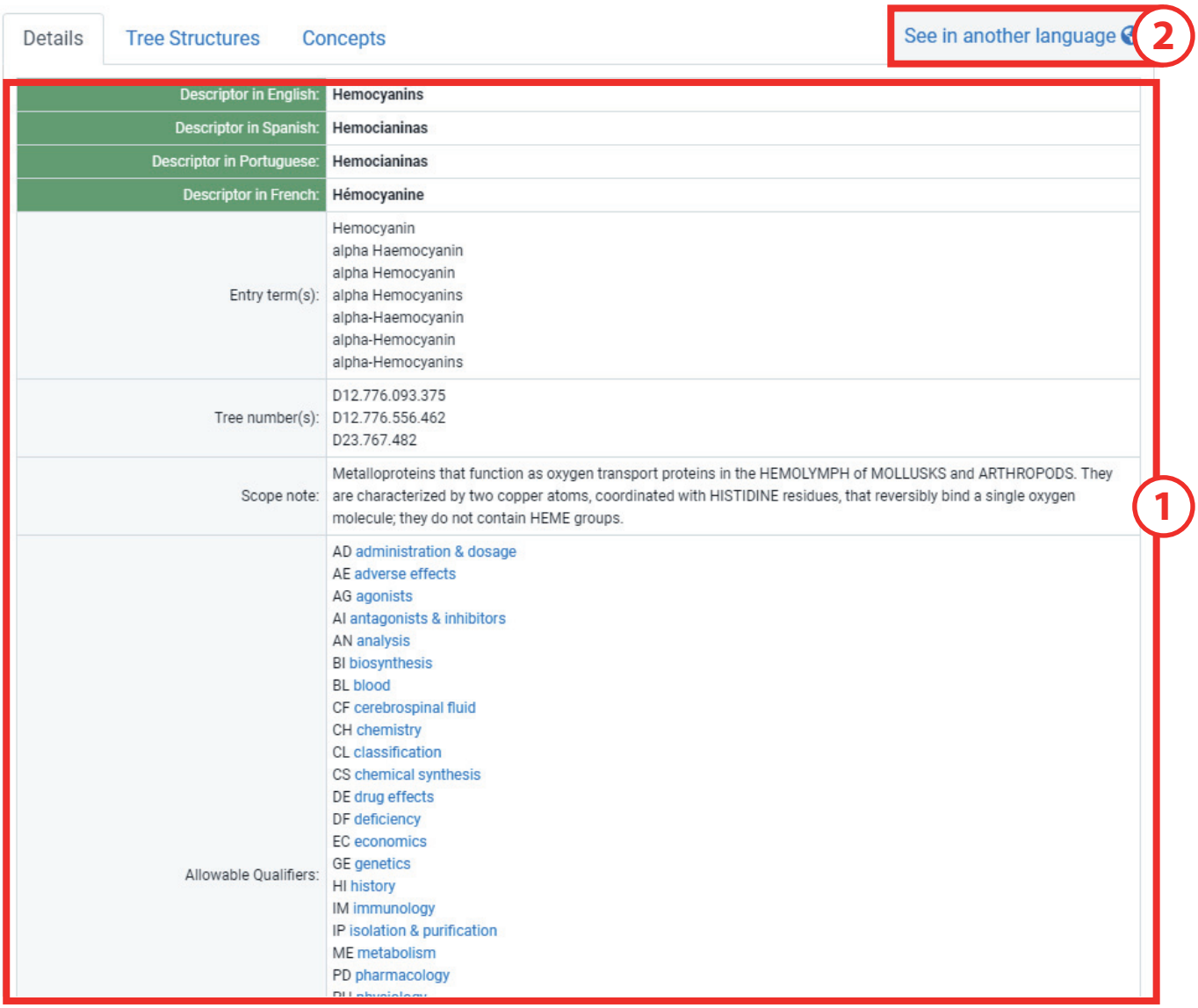
This search option is for when the descriptor or entry term is known.
1) Select **Exact term** from the left drop-down list;
2) Enter the descriptor or entry term in the box on the right;
3) Click on the magnifying glass or lens.



The result will show:

1) The record with the highlighted search term;
2) The See in another language button, which displays the translated versions of the record.

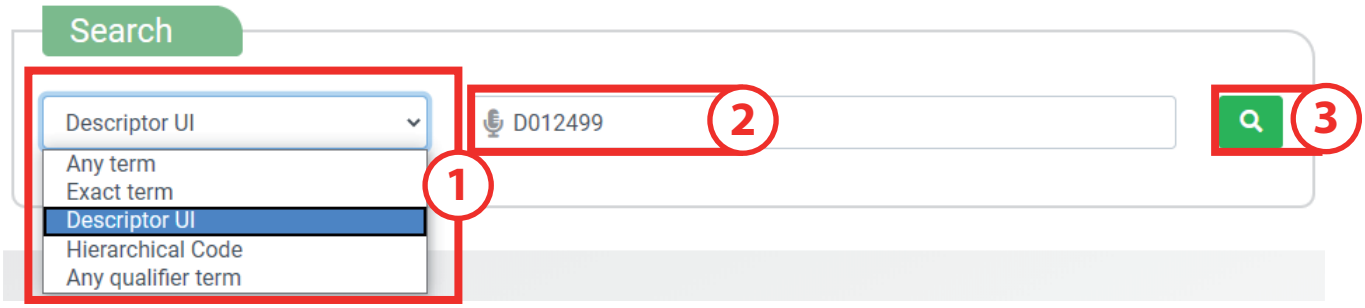
The button to display the results in a list will not be shown because there will be only one result.
In this search option, no results will be found using the truncator.



SEARCH FOR A DESCRIPTOR'S UNIQUE IDENTIFIER (Descriptor UI)

This option is for when the descriptor UI to be searched is known This UI will start with D0 when it exists in MeSH or with DDCS when it exists in DeCS. The ability to search the old numerical DeCS ID will still be implemented:

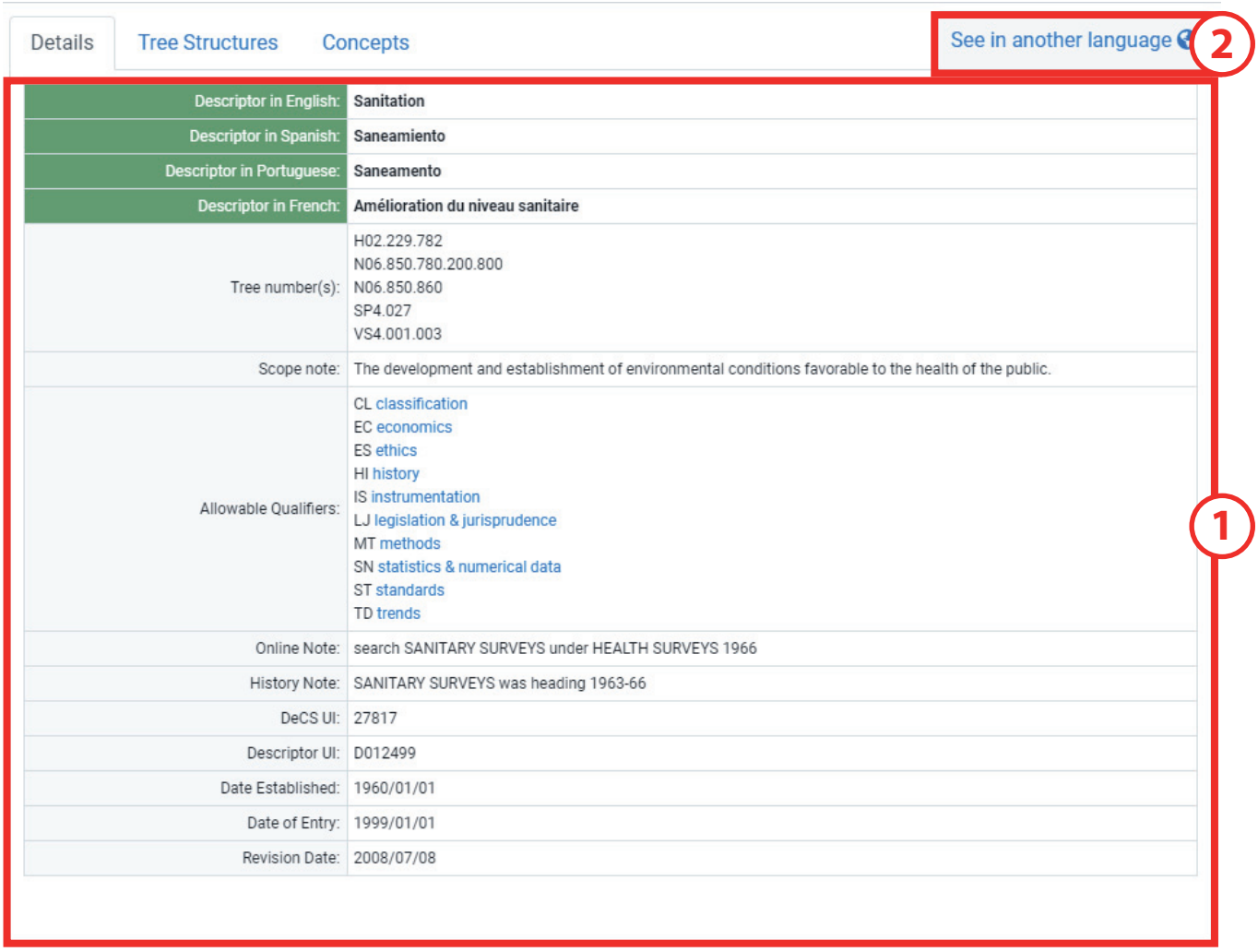
1) Select **Descriptor UI** from the left pull-down list;
2) Write the descriptor UI code;
3) Click on the magnifying glass.



The result will show:

1) the descriptor record corresponding to the searched UI;
2) **See in another language** button to see the record data in another language.

The button to display the results in a list will not be displayed because there will be only one result. No results will be found when using the truncator.

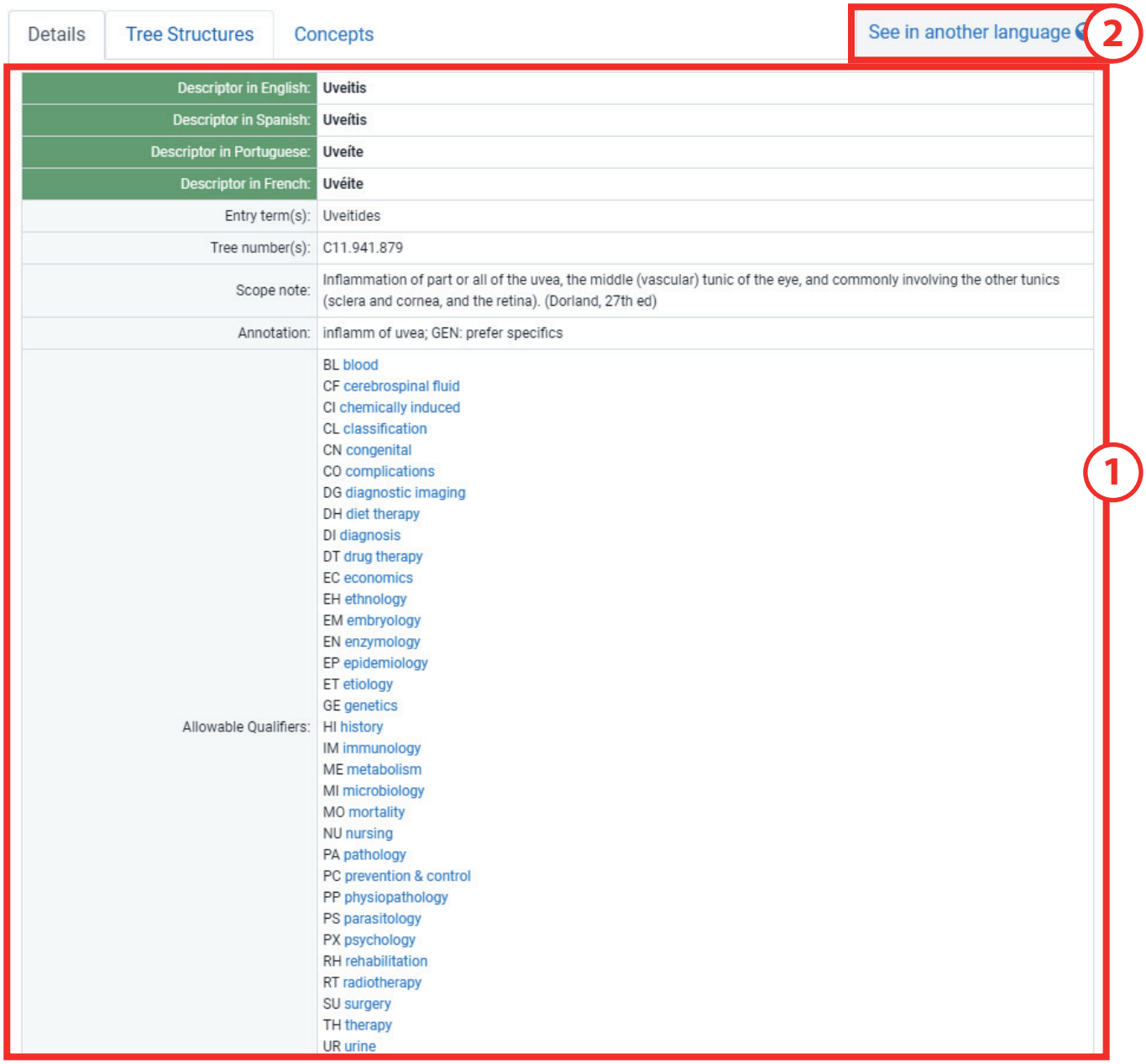


Descriptor in English:	**Sanitation**
Descriptor in Spanish:	**Saneamiento**
Descriptor in Portuguese:	**Saneamento**
Descriptor in French:	**Amélioration du niveau sanitaire**
Tree number(s):	H02.229.782 N06.850.780.200.800 N06.850.860 SP4.027 VS4.001.003
Scope note:	The development and establishment of environmental conditions favorable to the health of the public.
Allowable Qualifiers:	CL classification EC economics ES ethics HI history IS instrumentation LJ legislation & jurisprudence MT methods SN statistics & numerical data ST standards TD trends
Online Note:	search SANITARY SURVEYS under HEALTH SURVEYS 1966
History Note:	SANITARY SURVEYS was heading 1963-66
DeCS UI:	27817
Descriptor UI:	D012499
Date Established:	1960/01/01
Date of Entry:	1999/01/01
Revision Date:	2008/07/08

SEARCH FOR A HIERARCHICAL CODE

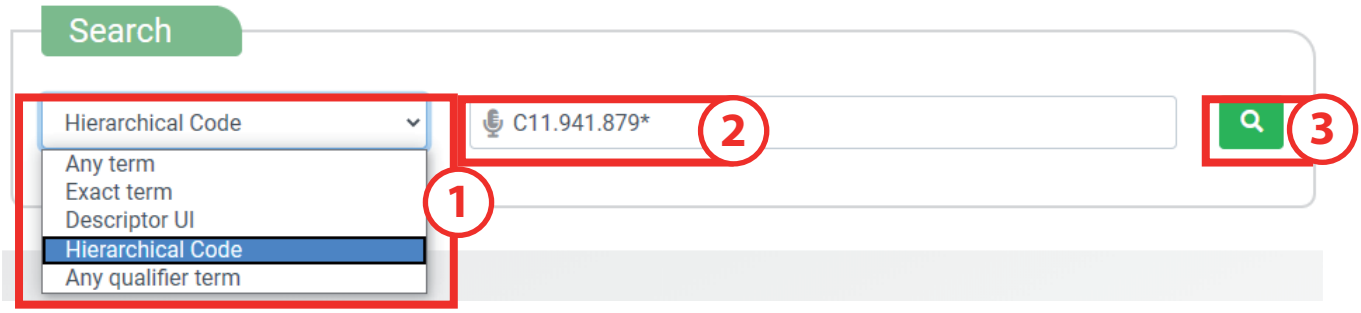
This option is for when the hierarchical code of the descriptor to be searched is known:
1) Select **Hierarchical Code** in the left drop-down list;
2) Enter the hierarchical code;
3) Click on the magnifying glass.

The result will show:
1) The descriptor record having the searched hierarchical code;
2) The **See in another language** button.

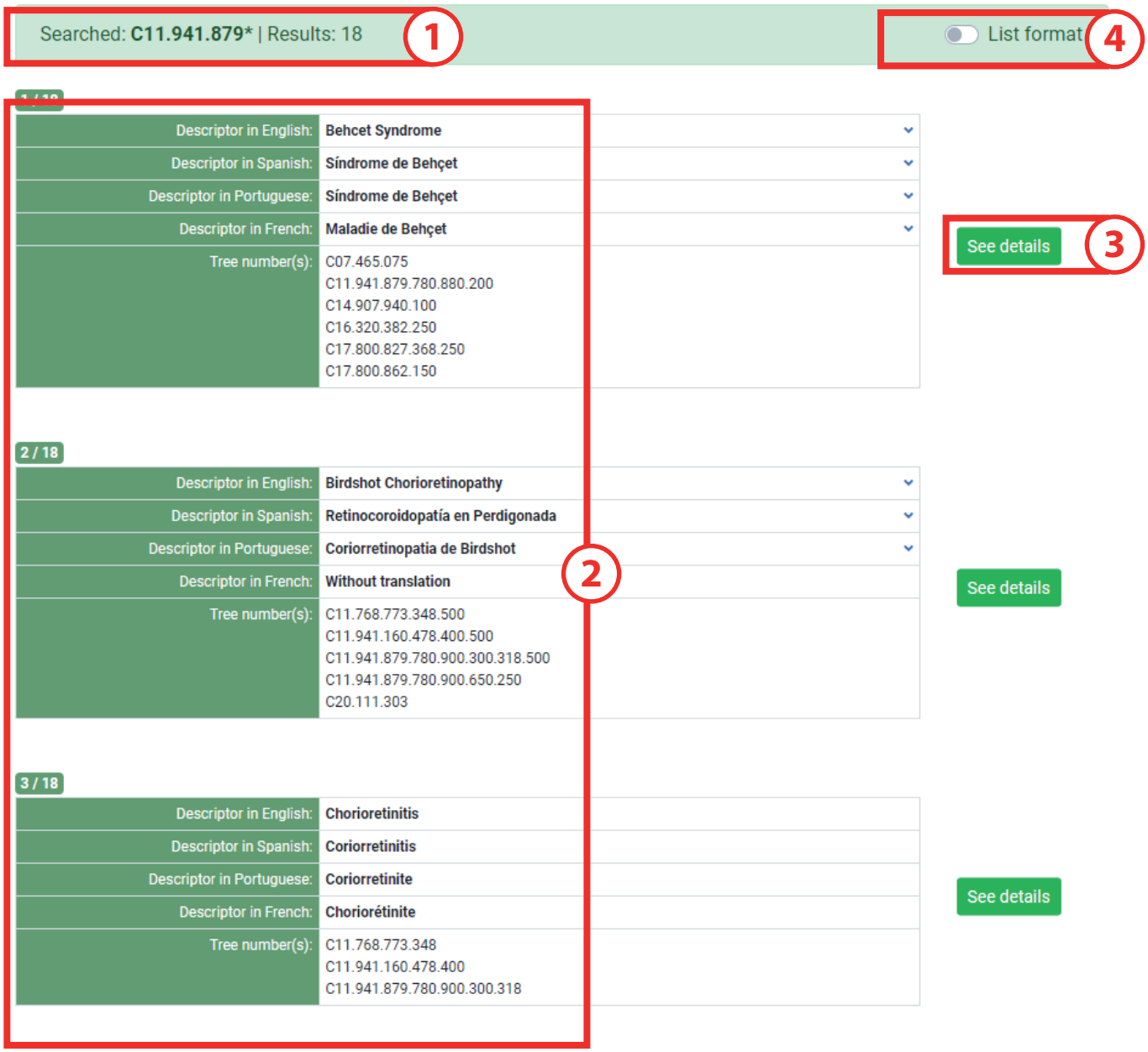


Descriptor in English:	**Uveitis**
Descriptor in Spanish:	**Uveítis**
Descriptor in Portuguese:	**Uveíte**
Descriptor in French:	**Uvéite**
Entry term(s):	Uveitides
Tree number(s):	C11.941.879
Scope note:	Inflammation of part or all of the uvea, the middle (vascular) tunic of the eye, and commonly involving the other tunics (sclera and cornea, and the retina). (Dorland, 27th ed)
Annotation:	inflamm of uvea; GEN: prefer specifics
Allowable Qualifiers:	BL blood CF cerebrospinal fluid CI chemically induced CL classification CN congenital CO complications DG diagnostic imaging DH diet therapy DI diagnosis DT drug therapy EC economics EH ethnology EM embryology EN enzymology EP epidemiology ET etiology GE genetics HI history IM immunology ME metabolism MI microbiology MO mortality NU nursing PA pathology PC prevention & control PP physiopathology PS parasitology PX psychology RH rehabilitation RT radiotherapy SU surgery TH therapy UR urine

The hierarchical code search allows the use of the * truncator at the end of the code. The truncator is useful for finding all the most specific descriptors for a given descriptor.
1) Select **Hierarchical code** in the left frame;
2) Enter the descriptor hierarchical code and an asterisk (*) at the end;
3) Click on the magnifying glass.

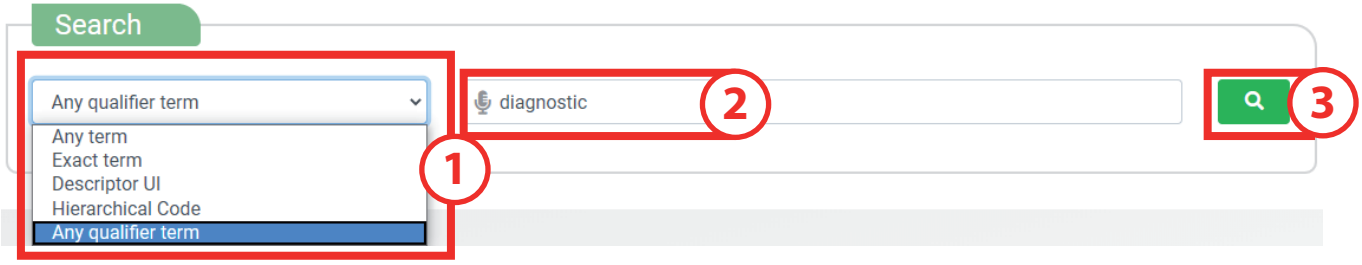


The result will show:
1) The number of records;
2) The records found that contain the searched hierarchical code;
3) The See details button for each record to expand the information about the record;
4) The option to see the results in a list of descriptors.

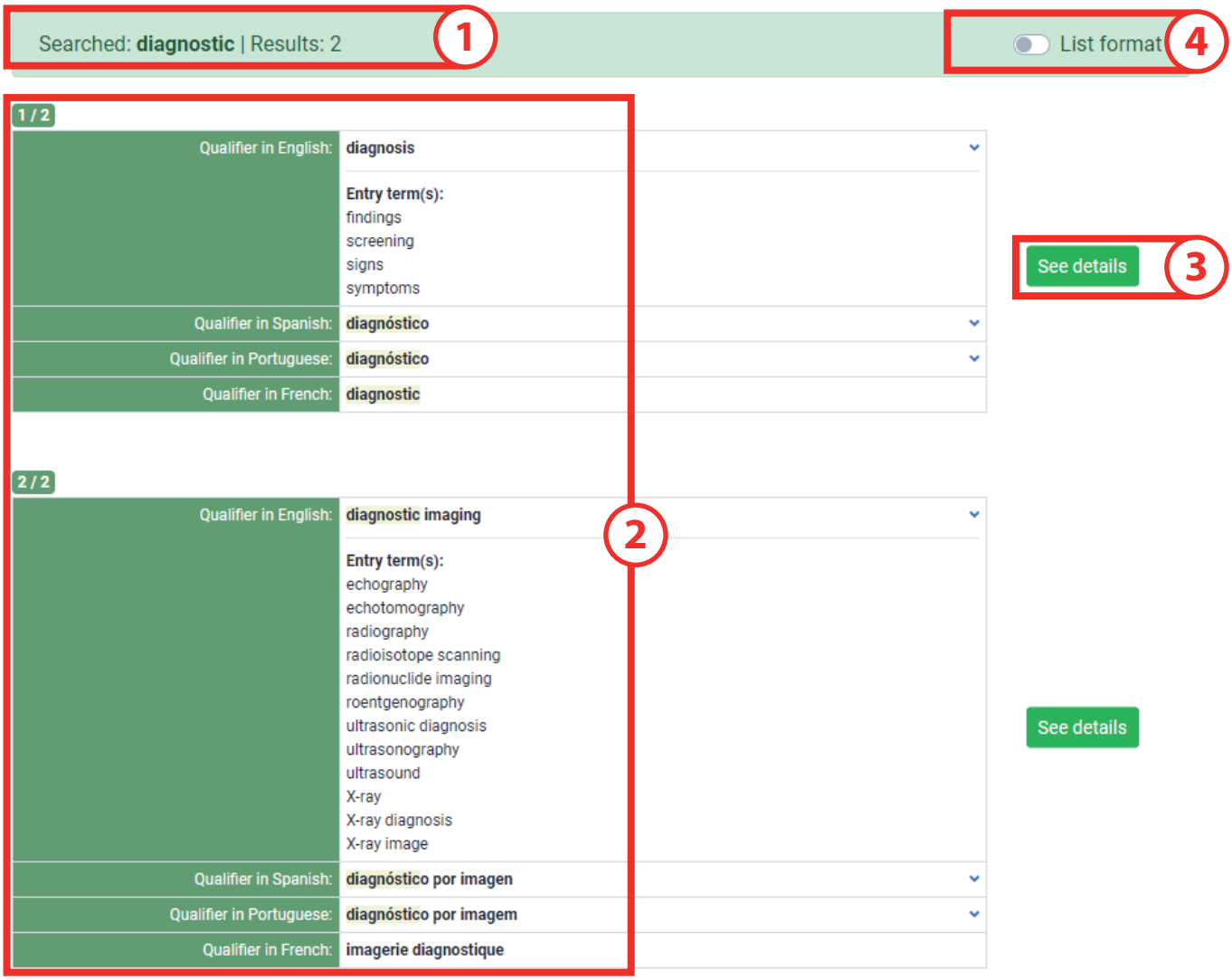


SEARCH FOR QUALIFIERS

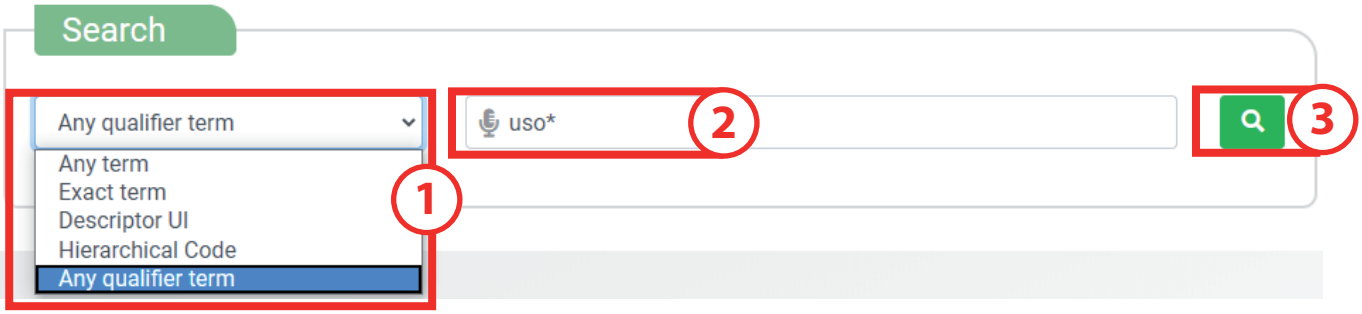
This option is used to query qualifiers:
1) Select **Any qualifier** term in the left frame;
2) Write the qualifier term;
3) Click on the magnifying glass.



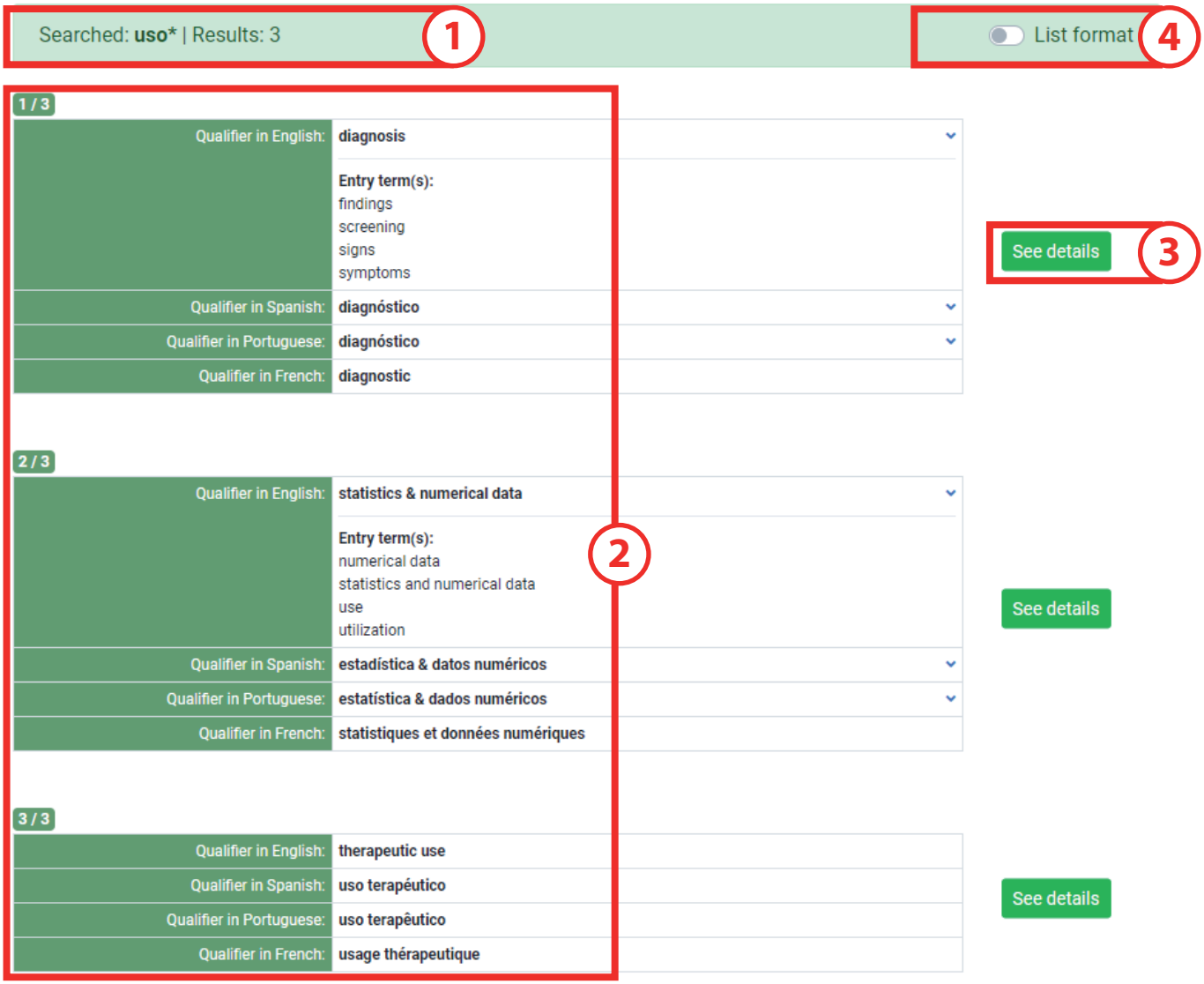
The result will show:
1) The number of records found;
2) The qualifier records that contain the search expression or string;
3) The **See details** button for each record to expand their information;
4) The option to view the search result in a list.



The qualifier search allows use of the asterisk (*) truncator:
1) Select Any qualifier term from the left drop-down list;
2) Type part of the qualifier term and, at the end, type an Asterisk (*);
3) Click on the magnifying glass.



The result will show:
1) the number of records found;
2) the qualifier records that contain the searched string or expression;
3) the See details button of each record to expand their information;
4) the option to see the search result in a list.



DeCS/MeSH
Health Sciences Descriptors

PAHO
Pan American Health Organization
World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Americas
BIREME
Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information